

EAGLETON INSTITUTE

MEMPHIS POLITICS: A STUDY IN RACIAL BLOC VOTING

William E. Wright

CASE

27

McGRAW-HILL BOOK COMPANY, INC.

320.0
E11c
No. 27, cop. 2.
1962

**EAGLETON INSTITUTE OF POLITICS
CASE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The cases are prepared under the general editorship of Paul Tillett of the Eagleton Institute of Politics staff with the assistance of the Case Advisory Committee.

Stephen K. Bailey, Dean of the Maxwell School, Syracuse University
Edwin A. Bock, Director of the Inter-University Case Program
Joseph P. Harris, Professor of Political Science, University of California at Berkeley
Alexander Heard, Chancellor, Vanderbilt University

Ivan Hinderaker, Professor of Political Science, University of California at Los Angeles
Ralph K. Huitt, Professor of Political Science, The University of Wisconsin
William J. Keefe, Chairman of the Political Science Department, Chatham College
Neil A. McDonald, Professor of Political Science, Douglass College
Dayton McKean, Professor of Political Science, University of Colorado
Howard Penniman, Chairman of the Department of Government, Georgetown University

The Eagleton Institute of Politics Studies in Practical Politics are premised on the importance and utility of political parties in American political life and are designed to increase understanding of the vital contribution to American democracy of partisan political activity. They introduce the case method, already applied successfully to business and public administration curricula, into the teaching of American politics. Cases provide an inside look at practical politics; these are aimed at improving student interest and performance in introductory through graduate courses. The cases themselves are lucid, dispassionate accounts of actual political activity—campaigning, financing, programming, framing issues, running affairs of state—built on materials not found between hard covers, materials hitherto locked in the oral tradition of politics. The program in practical politics contemplates continuous replenishment of cases to assure comprehensive coverage and to keep the cases close to political realities, student interests, and teaching needs.

Copyright © 1962 by Rutgers, The State University
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 62-18483

Printed in the United States of America

MEMPHIS POLITICS:

A STUDY IN RACIAL BLOC VOTING

William E. Wright

The possibility that a Negro might be elected to a Memphis city office for the first time since Reconstruction days attracted nationwide attention to that city's municipal election of August 20, 1959. There were five Negro candidates for city offices in that election, but the candidacy of Russell B. Sugarmon, Jr., for the post of public works commissioner became the focal point of interest, locally and nationally. It appeared that Sugarmon, who faced a field of several white candidates, might win on the basis of a Negro bloc vote if his opponents split the white vote evenly among themselves. This did not happen. Sugarmon finished second, but with 35,348 votes he made the strongest showing any Negro candidate had ever made in a Memphis city election. This was made possible by the Negro bloc vote. He lost the election because he was the victim of an even more effective bloc vote on the part of white Memphians. Thus the 1959 Memphis city election must be viewed as a case of competitive racial bloc voting.

The racial issue dominated the 1959 public works contest and, indeed, the city election as a whole almost from the beginning of the campaign. Racial lines were drawn early, and no serious attempts were made on either side to cross them. There was a white campaign under the unofficial slogan "Keep Memphis City Government White," and a Negro campaign under the slogan "This is a Crusade For Freedom."

The white and Negro campaigns were different in nature. The Negro effort was an offensive crusade; the white campaign was also a crusade, but a defensive one—a reaction to the "threat" posed by the Negro candidates. The white community viewed Sugarmon's candidacy for the public works commission post as the greatest threat. In this contest there were no major campaign issues other than race, and the important question, as far as white Memphians were concerned, was not "who is the best-qualified candidate?" It was, rather, "who can win against Sugarmon?"

This case study of the 1959 public works commissioner contest attempts to explain the Negro strategy within the context of earlier Negro political experience and the local political environment, the way in which it was

executed, and the white reaction to it. Finally, some implications for Negro political action in Memphis in the future will be drawn. The frame of reference of this study must necessarily be somewhat broader than the public works race, since Sugarmon was merely the most publicized member of the ticket of Negro candidates.

"MEMPHIS DOWN IN DIXIE"

Memphis, with a present population of almost 500,000, of whom 37 percent are Negroes, is the commercial, social, and cultural center of the mid-South, a predominantly agricultural (cotton-farming) region composed of western Tennessee, northern Mississippi, northeastern Arkansas, and southeastern Missouri. The *Commercial Appeal*, the Memphis morning newspaper, is popularly known throughout the region as the "Bible of the mid-South." Racially, the attitudes of white Memphians have been predominantly "Deep South" in character. At the time of the 1959 city election, the Negro had made little progress toward social equality in Memphis; the city schools, the municipal public transportation facilities, restaurants, hotels, and lunch counters were completely segregated.*

E. H. Crump ruled Memphis and Shelby County almost continuously for more than forty years, from 1910 when he first took office as mayor until his death in 1954. Although the power of Boss Crump was broken on the state level by the election of Estes Kefauver to the United States Senate in 1948, only his death ended his control over Memphis politics. A small group of Memphis business and professional men, led by Edmund Orgill, worked for the election of Kefauver in 1948 and presented the first serious opposition to the Crump machine locally in many years. After the death of Crump, his machine was left without leadership and Orgill was elected mayor in 1955. Memphis voters seemed to be happy with their newly-found political freedom and the era of the "independent" in local politics was born. Two serious attempts at political organization were made in Memphis after the death of Crump—at least as far as the white community was concerned. The Good Local Government League was organized in 1955 and led by Edmund Orgill and Edward Meeman, editor of the *Memphis Press-Scimitar*. This group was made up in large part of liberals and moderates who had opposed Crump in 1948 and subsequent elections. It admitted Negroes to membership, a fact that received considerable coverage in the *Commercial Appeal*. The unfavorable publicity given Negro participation, along with the group's record of endorsing unsuccessful candidates in local elections, contributed to its early demise.

The second large-scale effort at political organization after the death of Crump was the founding of a group called the "Citizens for Progress." This

* Since the 1959 city election, the Memphis Board of Education "voluntarily" (but under pressure of a court suit) allowed for partial integration of city schools. The municipal zoo, city transportation facilities, public libraries, and some downtown lunch counters have also been integrated. City park facilities will probably be desegregated in 1962. In addition, some formerly all-white cultural groups have recently admitted Negroes to membership.

group, formed in 1956 and made up largely of remnants of the city and county machines, was more conservative and segregationist than was the Good Local Government League. The "Citizens for Progress" motto was: "Keep Memphis Down in Dixie." Their candidates made a poor showing in the 1958 elections and this group went out of existence immediately thereafter. The Memphis newspapers have tended to decry any serious attempt at political organization within the white community as a dangerous step in the direction of a return to machine rule. What white political organization there was in local elections in 1959 was the personal organizations of the candidates.

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Memphis has had a mayor-commission form of government since 1909. Crump was the first mayor to serve under the commission form of government, which was instituted in an attempt to end the corruption that prevailed under the old city council. The mayor and the four city commissioners are all elected from and represent the city-at-large, an obvious handicap to Negro candidates for local offices who, under a council form of city government, could easily be elected to represent predominantly Negro districts. Prior to the 1959 election, commission candidates did not run for specific commission posts but were candidates merely for the city commission. The four commission candidates receiving the largest number of votes (a majority was not required) were elected. The mayor and the commissioners, upon taking office, met and assigned the specific commission posts. The individual commissioners are the administrative heads of departments of the city government (fire and police, public works, finances and institutions, and public service), with the power to hire and fire and to supervise the work of hundreds and even thousands of employees. This fact explains in part the intensity of white reaction to the candidacy of a Negro for a city commission post.

This election procedure was altered by private acts passed by the Tennessee Legislature in March, 1959, upon request of the Shelby County legislative delegation. These acts changed the Memphis election law by requiring candidates for the city commission and the school board to run for specific posts. This move was intended to prevent Memphis Negroes from employing the voting technique of "single-shotting"; i.e., of voting for only one candidate in a contest in which several candidates are to be elected. White political leaders were afraid that the Negroes would vote for a Negro candidate for the city commission or school board and withhold their votes from white candidates in the same race. In this manner Memphis Negroes would not add to the total vote of the white candidates and the Negro candidate might thereby receive enough votes to finish in the top four and be elected.

Ironically, this change in the Memphis election law, designed to handicap the chances for the election of a Negro candidate to public office, threatened to have the opposite effect from that intended and make it easier rather than more difficult for a Negro candidate to be elected in the 1959 city election.

Apparently no one had thought of adding a run-off provision to the election law, for unlike other states of the deeper South, both in Tennessee generally and in Memphis in particular, only a plurality and not a majority of the votes cast is required for election. White leaders began to fear that a particular commission post might attract several white candidates and a single Negro candidate. In this case, the Negro would probably be elected if the white candidates split the white vote evenly among themselves. In fact this is what almost happened in the 1959 municipal election. The public works race attracted a field of seven white candidates and one Negro candidate, Sugarmon. Similarly, the juvenile court judge contest attracted five white candidates and a single Negro candidate, Benjamin L. Hooks. Thus it appeared from the beginning of the campaign that Sugarmon and Hooks stood a good chance of winning in races which had attracted so many white candidates. This factor and the importance of the posts for which these Negro candidates were running caused these contests, especially the public works race, to become the focal point of the 1959 election.

PAST NEGRO POLITICAL EFFORTS

In contrast to most cities in the Deep South, Memphis Negroes have had very little difficulty in registering and voting. This seems to be a paradox in a city in which Negroes have made so little progress toward social equality in other sectors of community life. The most plausible explanation for this anomaly lies in the fact that the Crump organization made great use of the Negro vote, beginning with Crump's election as mayor in 1909. In fact, the Negro vote and the city and county employees were regarded as the two main sources of voting strength for the Crump machine. During the period of rule by the Crump machine the Memphis Negro vote was referred to as a "captive" vote and the expression was often used that the Negroes did not vote but "were voted." The Crump machine operated in predominantly Negro precincts through resident ward heelers, who were usually city employees or persons whose business depended upon licensing by city authorities. The job of these men was to have Negroes who lived in their precincts register to vote and then collect the registration and poll tax receipts. On election day these ward heelers would give these receipts to Negroes, frequently not the same ones in whose name they had been issued, to be taken to the polls as evidence of voter qualification. These Negro voters were often "herded" to the polls in trucks and busses to vote for Crump machine candidates.

No official records are available, but Negro registration probably did not exceed 10,000 in Memphis prior to 1950. Many of the Negroes who did register and vote during the Crump era were schoolteachers and other employees of the city and county governments. The feeling was prevalent among these employees that one had to vote "right" or else lose his job.

Memphis Negroes did receive something from the Crump organization in return for their votes. There were material benefits in the form of improved public services (better schools, streets, and street lighting) in Negro sections of the city. Some Negroes received jobs as teachers and city employees, but

the extent of this form of "payment" was probably slight. More frequent were intercessions on the part of the ward heelers with city authorities to get small favors for Negroes—licenses to operate certain businesses and non-prosecution of minor law violations. Moreover, Crump allowed Memphis Negroes to vote as they pleased in presidential elections. Probably the most important way in which Negroes benefited from "being voted" by the Crump machine, however, was in the general acceptance by the white community of their right to vote. Boss Crump, in using the Negro vote for more than 40 years, established and sanctioned the tradition of Negroes going to the polls in Memphis. Although the newspapers and opponents of the Crump machine criticized the way in which the Negro vote was used, the right of Memphis Negroes to vote was never seriously questioned. Thus Negroes, although they were taught many bad voting habits by the Crump organization, did acquire the experience and habit of voting in local and national elections.

Until the advent of the New Deal, Memphis Negroes voted Republican in presidential elections. Prior to 1936 almost all of the influential Negro political leaders were Republicans. The Negro Republican organization was stronger and more cohesive than that of the Democrats, even when the majority of Memphis Negroes switched parties and voted for Roosevelt, Truman, and Stevenson. The Democratic party was dominant on the local and state levels, and both white and Negro Republican leaders were more interested in national elections and chances to dispense patronage under Republican administrations than they were in actively participating in local elections. Just as Crump formed an alliance with east Tennessee Republicans in state elections, so he received the support of many white and Negro Republican leaders in local elections.

The success of the Negro Republican organization in Memphis has been due in large part to the leadership of Robert R. Church, Jr. (1920-35), J. B. Martin (1935-40), and Lieutenant George W. Lee (1940 to the present). Church, an influential figure in national Republican circles in the 1920s, served as the patronage referee for West Tennessee during the administrations of Harding and Coolidge. In general, however, Memphis Negro Republicans have not taken a great deal of interest in local elections in the past. Although there were conflicts between Memphis Negro and white Republicans, the two groups got along together more harmoniously than did the Democrats. Negroes were able to participate to a greater extent and with more independence in the minority Republican party organization in Memphis than in the dominant Democratic organization, whose leadership was operated on a "Jim Crow" basis.

Prior to 1958, the Negro Democratic organization was loosely organized. Its leadership consisted of a small group of Negro business and professional men led by Dr. J. E. Walker, the president of a large Negro insurance company in Memphis. Although by no means without influence, the Negro Democrats had a more informal, intermittently active, less cohesive, and less centralized organization than did the Negro Republicans.

The 1948 Democratic primary marked the beginning of serious local opposition to machine rule in the Negro community as well as in the white community. At that time Dr. Walker and a small group of Negro Democratic

leaders joined with the Orgill group to support Estes Kefauver against Judge John A. Mitchell, who had Crump's endorsement. Dr. Walker further opposed the Crump machine, this time in a local election, by personally offering himself as a candidate for the school board in the 1951 city election. This election marked the beginning of a nonpartisan voter registration drive in the Negro community that is still continuing today. At the beginning of that campaign there were about 7,000 registered Negro voters in the city; at its close almost 20,000 Negroes were registered. The machine, however, did not immediately lose its hold on the Negro vote. Walker, the only candidate to oppose the Crump organization slate in that election, received only about 7,500 votes in his unsuccessful bid for a school board post.

By the 1955 municipal election the more than 35,000 Memphis Negroes who were registered to vote constituted almost one-fourth of the total city registration. This election showed signs of increasing Negro political activity. The Reverend Roy Love, a Negro Baptist minister, was a candidate for the school board, and Negro Democratic leaders endorsed several white candidates: Edmund Orgill for mayor, Henry Loeb and Stanley Dillard for the city commission, and Mrs. Lawrence Coe for the school board. In the race for mayor, some Negro Republican leaders supported Watkins Overton, who had been a member of the Crump organization.

In this election, Memphis Negroes did not fully understand the voting technique of "single-shotting," and in the school board race (in which four members were to be elected) they voted for both Mr. Love and Mrs. Coe. The latter finished third in a field of 16 candidates with 29,185 votes, whereas Love lost by 6,000 votes. To this day Negro leaders feel that, had Negro voters consistently followed the theory of single-shotting and voted only for Love in the school board race, he would have been elected. In addition to Mrs. Coe, Orgill, Loeb, and Dillard were elected with Negro support.

The 1955 campaign was the greatest effort that Memphis Negroes had made in a local election, and this election (with Love's near victory) marked the beginning of white leaders' concern about the Negro vote. The white community in general was not yet disturbed about the possibility of a Negro candidate being elected to public office in Memphis.

The 1958 elections saw Memphis Negroes making a strong effort to elect a single Negro and several white candidates. Again this was not a united, nonpartisan effort, but one mostly of Negro Democratic leaders. A Negro attorney, S. A. Wilbun, was a candidate for state representative. In addition to Wilbun, Negro Democratic leaders supported Mayor Edmund Orgill for Governor, Albert Gore for United States Senator, and Robert A. Hoffman for Chancellor of Chancery Court. Wilbun was defeated but polled 26,266 votes, including, political observers believe, between 5,000 and 10,000 white votes. They attribute these white votes to the failure of the newspapers to stress the racial factor sufficiently to identify Wilbun as a Negro candidate. In their analysis of the 1958 election, the newspapers and political leaders attributed Hoffman's victory, in particular, to the combined support of the Memphis labor and Negro vote.

The 1958 campaign marked Sugarmon's entry into Memphis politics. The son of a prominent Memphis family, Russell Sugarmon, Jr., graduated from

Rutgers University and Harvard Law School, and completed a year of graduate studies at Boston University before entering the United States Army. Upon separation from the army, he returned to Memphis in 1956 and set up a law practice. In 1958, at the age of 29, he served as Wilbur's campaign manager. During this campaign Sugarmon and several other young Negro lawyers and businessmen took the lead in organizing the Shelby County Democratic Club as a permanent and cohesive political organization to replace the more informal and intermittently active Negro Democratic organization that had existed prior to 1958. The groundwork for an extensive ward and precinct organization was laid during the campaign. After the 1958 election, a constitution and by-laws for the Shelby County Democratic Club were drafted and ward and precinct branches were set up. The leadership of the club was placed in the hands of an executive committee, of which the branch chairmen and other officers of the organization were members. The executive committee appointed Dr. J. E. Walker general chairman (he was succeeded upon his death in 1958 by his son, Maceo Walker) and Sugarmon executive director. By the spring of 1960 the Shelby County Democratic Club was the parent organization of about 30 branches or precinct clubs (ranging in membership from 7 to 60 people), with a total membership of about 400 Negro Democrats. The long-range goal of the club is to have a branch in every precinct in which there are at least 50 Negro voters.

George W. Lee, an insurance executive, is *the* Negro Republican leader, and his organization, the Lincoln League, is a small, tightly-knit group of precinct leaders, active throughout the year. Thus, the Republican organization differs from the collective leadership and mass organization of the Shelby County Democratic Club. The political influence of the Lincoln League is enhanced by the Republican sentiments of the majority of Memphis Negro ministers.

The number of registered Negro voters in Memphis has steadily increased from less than 20,000 in 1951 to more than 50,000 in 1959, and the Negro proportion of the total registration has increased during this period from about 18 percent to 30 percent. The Non-Partisan Registration League, first formed in 1951, was broadened and reformed before the 1958 campaign with support from the Shelby County Democratic Club, the NAACP, civic clubs, the ministerial alliance, and other organizations. Some Republicans, but not the Lincoln League as such, were represented in the Registration League leadership. The Non-Partisan Registration League is a sponsoring and coordinating body which works through existing Negro organizations.

NEGRO LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGY

Memphis Negroes have tended since their liberation from machine control to support those white candidates who seemed, at least on the surface, to be the more "liberal." Negro leaders made no serious analysis of the criteria for supporting white candidates prior to 1959, but tended to be heavily influenced by liberal white leaders on this question.

By 1959, however, many Negro leaders had become disenchanted with Mayor Orgill and Commissioners Loeb and Dillard, whom they had

supported in the 1955 city election. They had had high hopes of what Orgill, in particular, would do for the Negro community when he took office in January, 1956. But he was able to do very little. He did make an unsuccessful attempt to appoint Dr. Walker to the City Hospital Board soon after taking office. This effort was defeated by a majority of the city commission, with only Orgill voting for Dr. Walker's appointment. Apart from this act, Mayor Orgill made no other major effort, at least publicly, to "do something" for the Negroes. Had Loeb and Dillard voted for this appointment, Walker would have become the first Negro member of this board. Negro leaders were highly irritated by the failure of these two commissioners to show their appreciation for their Negro electoral support. This dissatisfaction with both Loeb and Dillard was to grow stronger by 1959. Loeb, Negro leaders felt, was becoming more and more a segregationist. They particularly resented his attempt to locate a Negro housing project on penal farm land. They blamed Dillard for certain hospital regulations which they considered to be discriminatory or unfavorable to the Negro majority of the patients.

In 1959, therefore, the dominant attitude of Negro leaders was that the "liberal" white candidates for local offices who had received Negro support in the past several elections had let them down; upon taking office they had done nothing for the Negro community. The explanation may be that most of the so-called "liberals" were, at best, moderates. Both the willingness and the ability of these candidates to help the Negro leaders achieve some of their immediate goals had been overestimated. Orgill, Negro leaders felt, had tried to help them, but he did not have the political influence or backing essential to carry out his good intentions.

During the period between the 1955 and the 1959 city elections, racial attitudes of white Memphians became more segregationist. The Citizens for Progress motto, "Keep Memphis Down in Dixie," meant "let there be no integration in Memphis." The political liaison that had existed between the white and Negro communities during Crump's reign broke down. White candidates no longer made direct appeals for Negro votes out of fear of losing even more white votes.

Negro leaders therefore saw the 1959 city election as an opportunity to arouse the Negro community to political action and demonstrate to the white community that more than one-third of the population was not being allowed to share in the governing of Memphis and Shelby County. To this extent the Negro effort in the 1959 campaign may be considered a "protest" vote.

After the Tennessee Legislature passed the private acts changing the Memphis election law in March, 1959, Negro political leaders began thinking in terms of the opportunities that these changes might afford Negro candidates. Sugarmon and other leaders held a number of informal discussions on the possibility that several races for specific posts might attract so many white candidates that a single Negro candidate would have a good chance of winning a plurality of the votes. The public works post, in particular, seemed promising in this regard in view of increasing speculation that Loeb would not seek re-election.

The Reverend Henry Bunton, pastor of a large Methodist Church, was

the first Negro candidate to announce. He first talked to Lieutenant George Lee, who encouraged him to enter the school board race. Bunton then went to see Maceo Walker, who said that he would try to get him the support of the Shelby County Democratic Club.

Other Negro candidates who announced at an early date were The Reverend Roy Love, a Baptist minister, for the school board; Elihue Stanback, a public accountant and printing shop operator, for tax assessor; and O. Z. Evers, a postal employee, who announced his intention of running for some unspecified city commission post. Both Stanback and Evers were leaders in the Binghampton Civic League, an organization considered by other Negro leaders to be a "rump faction" among the Negro civic clubs. These two men were "independents" and would usually disagree with other Negro leaders on questions of political strategy. They began to campaign at once as a team and set up their own campaign headquarters, but they were not taken seriously by most Negro leaders. Their political influence was limited mainly to the Binghampton area.

After Commissioner Loeb announced on May 21 that he would oppose Orgill for the mayor's post, Sugarmon decided to enter the public works race. He announced on June 5 as an independent with A. W. Willis, his law partner, as his campaign manager. They talked over strategy and saw, on the basis of the white reaction to the Negro candidates, that they would need all of the Negro support they could get. Sugarmon and Willis, both leaders in the Shelby County Democratic Club, went to see the Negro Republican leader, Lee, to seek his support of Sugarmon's candidacy. Lee told them that he would not oppose Sugarmon, but that he needed "something to take to his people" for active cooperation. To meet this condition for Lee's support, Sugarmon and Willis induced a third law partner, B. L. Hooks, to run for juvenile court judge and thereby give Negro Republicans a prominent candidate to support. Hooks was the vice chairman of the Shelby County Executive Committee. Sugarmon, Hooks, and Willis, who was serving as campaign manager for both candidates, called a meeting which was attended by Lee; Maceo Walker; Jesse Turner, a prominent Negro businessman; and several Negro ministers. The candidates and their manager argued that all of the Negro candidates would go to the same sources in the Negro community for financial support for their campaigns. Moreover, they reasoned, a unified Negro ticket would have a broader appeal within the Negro community. There was agreement with this assessment of the situation and at this point the idea of the Volunteer Ticket of Negro candidates was born. The Reverends Bunton and Love were contacted and agreed to join the ticket. Stanback and Evers were offered a place on the Volunteer Ticket if they would agree to the conditions, primarily that of coordinated formulation and execution of campaign strategy, accepted by the other Negro candidates. These two candidates, however, refused and ran their own campaign. Evers later failed to qualify as a candidate, and Stanback was supported by Negro organizations even though he remained "independent."

The determination of strategy and direction of the campaign was placed in the hands of the Volunteer Ticket Steering Committee, which was made up of the two party heads, Lee and Walker; the four Negro candidates, Sugar-

mon, Hooks, Love and Bunton; Willis, as secretary, Turner, as treasurer; and three other leading Negro businessmen. Other committees were formed to handle specific campaign tasks. The largest and most important of these was the finance committee, to which were appointed almost 50 prominent Negro leaders, including twenty ministers. About one hundred Negro leaders in all served on Volunteer Ticket committees, constituting a fairly representative cross section of Memphis Negro leadership.

Political influence is not limited to any one small group of Negro leaders in Memphis, but is diffused among many groups and individuals. Party leaders occupy leading positions in the Negro leadership structure, but they need the support of other Negro groups and leaders in any campaign, especially in a united, non-partisan effort. Negro churches perform broader social and political functions than do most white churches, and Negro ministers to an increasing extent are seeking to provide civic and political leadership to their congregations.

Negro civic clubs, united under the governing body of the Bluff City Council of Civic Clubs, have served as important centers for civic and political education, voter registration, and recruitment and training of volunteer campaign workers. Negro labor leaders are also sources of political influence, as is the NAACP, although the latter organization does not engage directly in election campaigns. The Non-Partisan Registration League is charged with the task of conducting annual registration campaigns. The two Negro weekly newspapers must also be accorded a place in the Negro leadership structure, although their political influence in the Negro community is probably less than the negative reactions to the two daily newspapers. Negro attorneys are politically the most active professional group. Other categories of business and professional men have not, on the whole, tended to take an active interest in politics, although there have been active and influential individuals in these groups. The schoolteachers, in particular, are often charged with being politically apathetic. Social and fraternal groups, although they do not play a large role in initiating political action, nevertheless furnish a framework or medium of communication for community-wide political participation. Negro college students, in Memphis as well as elsewhere in the South, are becoming increasingly active politically.

Finally one must accord to two groups of Memphis Negro leaders a place, although of minor influence, in the political leadership structure. These are the "dissidents," such as Stanback and Evers, who will always manage to take a minority position and go their own independent way in political activities. Then there are the Negro "moderates," leaders who differ with the more demanding leaders not on over-all goals, but on questions of strategy and timing. These leaders formerly held positions of considerable power within the Negro community, but through their urging patient cooperation with "liberal" white leaders, they are now "standing on the sidelines" of political influence. One of these "moderate" leaders estimated that 90 percent of the Memphis Negro community will now follow the recommendations of the younger, more aggressive Negro leaders. They seem resigned, rather than bitter, at the turn of events, feeling that they have failed in their strategy of cooperation to produce a significant improvement in the social and political standing of the Negro community.

The dominant cleavage within the Negro leadership structure appears to be that of generational differences rather than occupational ones. There is a tendency for the younger businessmen, lawyers, and ministers to agree on strategy and timing. This cleavage is, however, decreasing. The activities of the Negro students in the lunch counter sit-ins, in particular, have drawn the older Negroes closer to the strategy and tactics of the younger generation. Social and political action, along the lines advocated by the younger Negroes, has "caught fire" within the Negro community, leaving the "dissenters" as "voices crying in the wilderness."

The Negro leadership structure in Memphis should not be viewed then as one of competing, insulated groups. Rather there is considerable overlap within the Negro leadership structure. Leadership, in a phrase of Sugarmon's, to a large degree "changes hats." One finds that politically active Negro ministers, for example, also tend to be active in the NAACP, Registration League, and even the party organizations. Negro labor leaders tend to be active in the Shelby County Democratic Club and the civic clubs. Many civic club leaders play prominent parts in the NAACP and the party organizations.

In February, 1959, two Negro ministers, The Reverend Mr. Bunton and a Baptist minister and labor leader, Alexander Gladney, organized the Memphis and Shelby County Leadership Council for the purpose of providing "a unified and cooperative effort on the part of Negro leadership for the incoming city election." Lee and Walker were among those present at the first meeting of this group, which constituted itself as a union of religious, fraternal, civic and welfare, social, business, and veterans organizations and women's clubs. It claimed to represent more than 70 Negro organizations. Although this organization received considerable publicity in the Negro press, it restricted its campaign activities to holding a few large meetings, making several public statements, and endorsing the Negro and several white candidates. The real leadership of the Negro campaign, in terms of both strategy and organization, resided in the hands of the Volunteer Ticket organization. There was considerable overlap in the leadership of these two groups, since the Leadership Council had recruited most of the influential Negro leaders who were later appointed to Volunteer Ticket committees, but the two groups operated on different levels. The function of the Leadership Council was described by one Negro leader as one of coalescing Negro organizations in support of the campaign and endorsing white candidates. It gave them a badge of political participation to wear without their getting involved in the "fighting" organizations. The Leadership Council set up no organization, carried on no ward and precinct work, conducted no rallies, and raised little money in the way of campaign funds. These activities were carried out, with less publicity, by the Volunteer organization. Nevertheless the Leadership Council helped to establish the nonpartisan character of the Negro campaign.

The major question of Negro strategy to be decided was the type of campaign to be conducted. Most of the members of the Volunteer Ticket Steering Committee soon came to favor a "crusade-type" campaign of high emotional pitch in the Negro community. These motives were present from the beginning, but were translated into action only after Negro leaders saw

the white reaction to the entry of Negro candidates into the campaign. Some Negro leaders disagreed with this "black crusade" strategy and were heard by the Steering Committee. These leaders argued that such a campaign would destroy any chances the Negro candidates might have of winning. The majority of the Steering Committee, while agreeing with this prediction, disagreed in terms of the campaign goals and felt that the Negroes really had no choice in view of the white reaction to the Negro candidates. It is reported that there were no serious disagreements on campaign strategy within the Steering Committee. Perhaps the major strategy disagreement concerned the decision to run The Reverend Mr. Bunton for the school board post occupied by Mrs. Coe. Although at least one Negro leader announced her continued support of Mrs. Coe, this decision did not lead to a serious split within the Negro leadership structure.

THE WHITE CANDIDATES ANNOUNCE

Sam Chambers, a painting contractor and self-admitted "perennial" candidate, was the first candidate to announce for the public works post. Chambers had decided after an unsuccessful bid in the 1955 city election to run for the city commission in 1959. He was widely identified as a "labor" candidate and was to look primarily to the ranks of organized labor for his support.

W. C. Anderson, assistant superintendent of the City Park Commission Recreation Department, announced on May 5 as the second public works candidate. Anderson was relatively well-known in Memphis as a sports figure. Being young and having little political experience, he hoped to appeal to the younger voters. Anderson had no extensive campaign organization.

Speculation was widespread around the middle of May that City Engineer Will Fowler and City Personnel Director William Farris were both awaiting Loeb's decision whether he would oppose Orgill for the mayor's post or run for re-election as public works commissioner. On May 20 Mayor Orgill announced his intention to run for re-election, and on the following day Loeb declared publicly that he would oppose Orgill.

Two days later came the entry of a third white candidate for public works commissioner. He was John Ford Canale, administrative assistant to the County Commission. Canale had extensive political experience, serving as the campaign manager for the Citizens for Progress ticket in the 1958 election. His identification with the county was to prove a handicap in running for the city commission; some felt that his being a Catholic also put him at a disadvantage in running for public office in a predominantly Protestant community.* Canale could count upon the support of his friends in the defunct Citizens for Progress organization. He also expected to attract the support of some labor leaders as a result of his having served in 1958 as the campaign manager of a successful candidate who had had union support. His chances of receiving much support from organized labor were lessened

* Others, however, do not attribute much weight to the religious factor. City Commissioner Dwyer, who has been re-elected several times, is a leading Catholic. Catholics have also served as county sheriff and as members of the county court.

by the presence of a well-known labor candidate, Chambers, in the same race. Canale initially hoped to receive considerable Negro support, but these hopes were later dashed by Sugarmon's entry into the contest.

On May 25 City Personnel Director William Farris announced his candidacy for public works commissioner. Farris had served as administrative assistant to three Memphis mayors, including Orgill, before taking on the post of city personnel director. He was not well known among Memphis voters, but he was the only white candidate in the public works race to enter the campaign with a functioning organization.

A group of young businessmen had decided in February, 1959, to persuade Farris to run for a city commission post. At that time, it is reported, Farris was hesitant. This group set about building a campaign organization for Farris even before he announced; they brought together 14 men who were active in civic work and divided the city's 70 wards into 14 areas, each containing five wards. Each of the 14 men was responsible for Farris' campaign organization in one of the areas. As an experiment, mimeographed postcards calling for volunteer workers for Farris were sent out. This action proved successful, and by April the Farris organization had a list of supporters and key people in most of the city's precincts. Farris was shown the details of the organization which had been set up for him. On May 25 he announced publicly that he was a candidate for the public works post.

On June 1 Sam Clark, a 60 year old carpenter and perennially unsuccessful candidate for public office, announced as the fifth white candidate. His entry was followed two days later by that of Will Fowler, 72 years old and incumbent city engineer. Fowler had served in this nonelective post in the Public Works Department for 40 years. He was the best known of the public works candidates and was conceded by most Memphians to be the best qualified man for that post. Fowler was handicapped by his advanced age and by his lack of experience as a candidate for an elective public office. He did, however, have many influential supporters among Memphis political leaders and business and professional men. Fowler, who had been associated with the Crump machine, apparently desired election to the post of public works commissioner as the climax of a long career of public service in that department.

On June 5 Sugarmon entered the public works race as the seventh, and single Negro, candidate.

THE SEARCH FOR A RUN-OFF

When Commissioner Loeb announced that he would oppose incumbent Mayor Orgill, the public works contest became the only commission race in which the incumbent commissioner was not seeking re-election to his post. The reaction of the newspapers and white leaders to Sugarmon's entry into this field of white candidates was immediate and intense. The white strategy which resulted from the candidacy of Sugarmon and the other Negro entries falls into four somewhat overlapping phases. First, there was a search for some means of conducting a run-off or pre-primary to narrow the field to the two leading candidates. The second phase saw white leaders

and the newspapers waiting to see whether or not the white candidates could agree among themselves to cut down the field by some of them withdrawing voluntarily. Third came the search for the "strong man," a leading white candidate who could attract a bandwagon following and defeat Sugarmon. The final phase of the 1959 white strategy, once having found this man, was to get a white bandwagon rolling in his behalf and to try to further cut down the field of white candidates by persuading some to withdraw.

The search for a run-off provision began immediately after Sugarmon entered the race. The *Memphis Press-Scimitar* reported on June 9 that City Attorney Frank Gianotti was studying the possibility, suggested by Commissioner Loeb, of holding a run-off for the city election. Loeb explained his concern with a run-off as follows: "My interest in bringing this matter up is to try to see that an office-holder in Memphis is elected by the majority and not by any single-shotting." This statement reflected the basic assumption of white strategy in the election: that any Negro candidate could represent only the Negro minority of Memphis. Therefore, the election of a Negro candidate to public office would not be an expression of the majority will.

City Attorney Gianotti was of the opinion that a change in the election law to provide for a run-off could be made only by a private act passed by the Tennessee Legislature, which would not meet again in regular session until January, 1961. On June 16 Commissioner Loeb announced that he would ask Governor Buford Ellington to call a special session of the legislature to pass a private act to provide for a run-off in Memphis elections. This plan fell through two days later when the *Press-Scimitar* reported that Governor Ellington had refused to call a special session.

White political leaders then began discussing the possibility of holding a voluntary preferential primary ("pre-primary") before the August 20 election. Such a pre-primary would be conducted by "gentleman's agreement" among the public works candidates soon after the July 21 qualifying deadline. Only the two top candidates in this pre-primary would then be listed on the official ballot on August 20. The cost of this special election, estimated at \$40,000, would be borne by the city. Any hopes for a run-off were quickly terminated, however, when City Attorney Gianotti announced on June 19 that he doubted whether the city had legal authority to use public funds to pay for an unofficial election. This announcement ended the first phase of white strategy and reaction to the Negro candidates.

THE WHITE STRATEGY TAKES FORM

The next step of white leaders was to attempt cutting down the field by inducing some of the white candidates to withdraw in favor of others. Their first preference seemed to favor leaving it up to the candidates to decide among themselves who were to withdraw.

By June 20 the public's attention had shifted from the mayor's race between Orgill and Loeb to the public works and juvenile court judge races, each of which had a field of contestants consisting of one Negro entry and at least five white candidates. On that day the *Press-Scimitar* pointed out the

chances of a Negro candidate's winning in these races. The newspaper's assumption was that the white candidates would divide the white vote evenly among themselves, while Sugarmon and Hooks would receive a solid Negro vote. The suggestion was made explicitly: "These races [i.e., public works and juvenile court judge] are being 'run' now instead of in the final days of the campaign, observers believe. The white candidates who seem to be the stronger may expect those who are not doing so well to withdraw."

On June 23, Anderson invited the other white candidates to meet at his home to evaluate Sugarmon's chances of winning and to discuss ways of cutting down the field of white candidates. The *Press-Scimitar* reported that Farris, Canale, and Chambers had agreed to meet with Anderson. Fowler, calling it a publicity stunt on Anderson's part, refused. The next day, however, Farris and Canale declined and left only Chambers willing to meet with Anderson. The meeting was not held. Thus failed the white strategy of leaving it up to the white candidates voluntarily to decide among themselves who were to drop out of the race. All of these candidates contended that they could win and none wished to let down those supporters who were working on his behalf.

The *Commercial Appeal* reported on June 28 that a new line of thinking of white leaders was emerging:

"... every eligible voter should go to the polls in August and know the entry for whom he votes. Such an approach is in contrast to the impractical idea of all but one of the white candidates in the race for the Public Works Commission withdrawing, either voluntarily or through coercion. . . . If voting in contests where there are white and Negro candidates is to be along racial lines, then the whites have a decided advantage."

This was the idea that the way to defeat Sugarmon was for Memphis whites to out-bloc-vote the Negroes, although it was not so labelled. According to the 1958 city census, the population of Memphis was 65 percent white and 35 percent Negro. Historically, white voters had constituted at least 70 percent of the registered voters in the city. In those races in which there were several white candidates and a single Negro entry, one white candidate would gradually take the lead and attract a bandwagon following, white leaders believed. As the *Commercial Appeal* expressed it: "The bandwagon development could come from several sources: newspaper encouragement, word-of-mouth advertising, backing by influential groups, one candidate withdrawing in favor of another."

In early July the newspapers reported that Memphis business leaders had received postcards from Mississippi and Arkansas threatening an economic boycott of Memphis firms if a Negro should be elected to the city commission. These cards were unsigned, but the *Press-Scimitar* reported on July 2 that Robert B. Patterson of Greenwood, Mississippi, Executive Secretary of the Association of Citizens Councils of Mississippi, had confirmed that these postcards were from his association. About 100 cards had been mailed to people in Memphis. This action on the part of the white Citizens Council is the most tangible evidence of the interest taken in Sugarmon's race for the city commission by persons in the mid-south area around Memphis.

An event took place on July 4 which was to throw the public works race even more into the spotlight. Incumbent Mayor Orgill became ill while campaigning and was forced to withdraw from the mayor's race. His withdrawal left Henry Loeb without serious opposition, although several white candidates did subsequently enter the mayor's race. The contest between Orgill and Loeb had promised to be a hard-fought one, with the *Press-Scimitar* backing Orgill and the *Commercial Appeal* probably endorsing Loeb. Had Orgill remained, the public works race would have had to share the spotlight with the mayoralty contest. As it turned out, Sugarmon's candidacy tended to dominate the 1959 campaign.

ENDORSEMENTS

Among the white candidates, Canale, Chambers, Fowler, and Farris actively sought the backing of influential groups and the newspapers. Farris, who had the most extensive and efficient campaign organization of the white candidates, was most active. His planned strategy of holding back early in the campaign and pushing hard in the latter part was upset by Sugarmon's entry into the public works race. Farris was thus forced to start his public campaign earlier than he had anticipated, as white Memphians were looking for the "strong man" to emerge in that race. Farris and his campaign leaders approached the leaders of all organized groups that might have any influence with the white electorate and both daily newspapers to show them the details of his campaign organization and to convince them of his chances of winning against Sugarmon.

Much of the success in "selling" Farris to group leaders and the newspaper editors has been attributed to the work of the Farris "blitz committee," a group of about 25 people who conducted an intensive campaign in the neighborhoods in which these "influentials" lived to create the impression that the Farris campaign was being carried on this actively all over the city.

An additional element of Farris' campaign strategy was, early in the campaign, to single out Canale as his best opposition. Farris made several public attacks on Canale's identification with the county; he used as an issue the heated controversy between the city and county governments over the division of school funds, although this issue was then in the courts and neither candidate could do anything about it. Canale responded by attacking Farris. This exchange, in the opinion of Farris' campaign manager, made Farris and Canale the two leading white candidates in the public works race. Both Farris and Canale made complimentary remarks about Fowler and ignored their other opponents.

Sam Chambers was the first public works candidate to benefit from endorsement by an influential group. On July 8, 400 delegates representing about one hundred AFL-CIO and independent locals met to endorse candidates for city offices. In a roll call, the outcome of which was not surprising in view of Chambers' reputation as a labor candidate, he received the votes of 197 delegates. The other candidates received the following votes: Sugarmon (25), Canale (14), Anderson (2), and Farris (1). Only 239 of the 400 delegates voted. Many abstained and others left the meeting during a heated

parliamentary debate which preceded the vote. A political columnist of the *Commercial Appeal* on July 12 attributed the abstentions to the "steam-roller tactics" employed by the Screening Committee to push through the meeting an endorsement of Chambers. "In the final analysis," this columnist wrote, "there's serious doubt over how many rank and file union members will follow the meeting's recommendations." Later in July Chambers picked up additional labor support, when the United Auto Workers Citizenship Council gave him their endorsement. The United Council of Railroad Brotherhoods, on the other hand, endorsed candidates for twelve posts but failed to reach agreement on a public works candidate. In August, Chambers received the backing of a local of the International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite, and Paper Mill Workers; "Telephone Workers For Chambers," a group made up of members of the Communications Workers local and their families, was formed to operate a campaign headquarters for their favored candidate. In general, Chambers received considerable labor support in the form of endorsements, but the rank and file of Memphis locals have not always followed the recommendations of their leaders, and it was uncertain what labor support Chambers could count on at the polls.

On the evening of July 14 a group of about 30 people who had been members of Orgill's campaign committee met and endorsed the four incumbent school board members who were seeking reelection. The chairman of this group, which took the name "Dedicated Citizens Committee," was Dr. Stanley Buckman, the head of a Memphis chemical firm. Most members of Orgill's campaign committee felt that they should continue to participate actively in the campaign by endorsing those candidates whom they believed would act in accordance with Orgill's principles. They challenged all candidates to make known their stands on nine points, which included the appointment of a charter commission to study the best form of government for Memphis, consolidation of duplicate city-county functions, the division of school taxes and bond money between the city and the county, annexation of urban areas adjoining the city, comprehensive planning for Shelby County as a whole, the enactment of a "Little Hatch Act" and the strengthening of the Civil Service Commission, and segregation. This last point caused criticism within the Negro community and even within the DCC itself. Some of the DCC members opposed the inclusion of this point and this item was dropped from the list of principles when the DCC reorganized as the Citizens' Association immediately after the 1959 election. Dr. Buckman later contended that the listing of the point, the maintenance of "community patterns of segregation by all legal means," in DCC ads represented merely the "views of the candidates," and not the view of the DCC. Nevertheless, the ads of the DCC implied support for this principle and the fact that the "liberal" DCC found it necessary to include it in their "platform" may be taken as evidence of the racial polarity of the 1959 campaign.

The *Press-Scimitar* praised these "dedicated citizens" for taking an active part in the campaign. This praise was not surprising, since the editor of this newspaper, Edward Meeman, was a friend and supporter of Edmund Orgill. Just as its predecessor, the Good Local Government League, the Dedicated Citizens Committee was given extensive coverage in the *Press-Scimitar*—

much more than in the *Commercial Appeal*. The influence of this relatively small group in the campaign was undoubtedly magnified by the extensive coverage which it received in the *Press-Scimitar*.

On July 22 the DCC announced its support of Farris for public works commissioner and its endorsements for other officers: Loeb for mayor; Claude A. Armour, John T. Dwyer, and James W. Moore for city commission posts. This group of candidates, plus the four incumbent school board members, was named the "Unity Ticket." The candidate screening committee of the DCC decided that these candidates had given the most "satisfactory" replies to the nine points on which they were queried. The DCC endorsement of Farris seems to have been based on more than his association with Orgill. Fowler was apparently eliminated from consideration because of his advanced age and his identification with the "old [Crump] crowd." Canale was similarly ruled out because of his associations with the remnants of the Crump machine. The other white candidates were not considered strong enough to warrant consideration by the DCC.

The *Press-Scimitar* pointed out that the "Unity Ticket" represented several previously opposing factions. Loeb had opposed Orgill for mayor; Armour and Dwyer had been identified with the "Citizens for Progress"; Farris and Moore were "independents." The DCC was apparently interested in establishing itself as a permanent political organization and thus had to back "winning" candidates in order to escape the fate of its predecessor, the Good Local Government League. The "Unity Ticket" was, however, united in name only; none of its nine members endorsed all of the other members of the ticket.

The *Press-Scimitar* gave immediate editorial support to this action on the part of the Dedicated Citizens Committee. It applauded the plan of a unity ticket to prevent the election of a Negro candidate to city office; an event which, in its opinion, would not make for good race relations or promote the political progress of Memphis Negroes.

In a move motivated to a large degree by the desire to counteract several of the endorsements made by the DCC, the heads of two Memphis cotton firms, E. W. "Ned" Cook and L. T. Barringer, began gathering together a group of business and professional men to support a slate of candidates, including Canale for the public works post. This group later took the name "Business and Professional Political Action Group," and was carefully selected to represent the desired point of view. It was not recruited as a representative group of Memphis business and professional men. At its core were men who had supported the Citizens for Progress organization and the candidates endorsed by it.

At a July 27 meeting of the Cook-Barringer group attended by more than 25 Memphis businessmen, ten candidates were endorsed. Canale received the group's endorsement for public works commissioner; in a show of hands, Canale received 19 votes, Fowler 2 votes, and Farris none. Two additional luncheon meetings of this group were attended by more than 50 businessmen who affirmed the earlier endorsements.

The unrest in the white community over the candidacy of Sugarmon and the other Negro entries led the Memphis and Shelby County Council of

Civic Clubs to conduct a straw vote on the public works race. Such a move was unprecedented in the history of the Council, whose by-laws prohibit its participation in partisan politics. The Council of Civic Clubs is composed of about 600 delegates representing 66 local civic clubs. At a meeting on July 24 a majority of the delegates in attendance voted to throw the meeting into a "committee of the whole" in an attempt to circumvent the nonpartisan provision of the Council's by-laws. Only 159 of the 600 delegates voted in this poll, which had the objective of determining the most "popular" candidates. Chambers and Farris received the most "votes," but the totals were not released. The president of the Council of Civic Clubs, Charles Cuneo, a Canale supporter, opposed holding the poll, but he was overruled by a majority vote of the delegates attending the meeting. Naturally, this straw vote was interpreted by the press as constituting an endorsement of Chambers and Farris, but Cuneo denied that this action could be taken as endorsement on the part of the Council. It was, he said, merely a straw vote, a "popularity contest." The next day the *Press-Scimitar* reported: "Charles Cuneo, Council President, hopes that this group's action last night will encourage some white candidates to withdraw, thus lessening the chance of a Negro being elected to office."

Another endorsement for Canale came from a group of veterans, named the "Veterans for Better Government"—a group which, like the Dedicated Citizens Committee and the Business and Professional Political Action Group, was organized expressly for the 1959 campaign. The Veterans for Better Government had been formed in June by a group of former local officials of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars to take political action in the campaign. This special organization had to be set up since the American Legion and VFW by-laws prohibit the endorsement of candidates for public office by these organizations. Although the impetus for founding the VBG was not limited to stopping the Negro candidates, this factor was probably the most important consideration. In a stormy session on July 29, the Veterans for Better Government met under the chairmanship of John D. Parish, a paint contractor, and George T. Lewis, an attorney, both active Canale supporters. There were about 200 persons in attendance, 35 of whom later walked out of the meeting in protest over the endorsement of particular candidates. This group narrowly endorsed Canale, who received 77 votes to 66 for Chambers.

On July 27, the Executive Committee of the Memphis and Shelby County Property Owners' Association voted to endorse Farris for public works commissioner. The next day, Mayor Edmund Orgill announced his support of Farris.

THE NEWSPAPERS SPEAK OUT

In an editorial on July 29, the *Press-Scimitar* expressed its hope that the Cook-Barringer businessmen's group would reconsider its endorsement of Canale and Dillard and instead support Farris and Moore. On July 31, this newspaper specifically endorsed Farris. It eliminated the other candidates from consideration in the following manner: Sugarmon was "an able man,"

but his election to such an important post would not be in the best interest of either white or Negro Memphians. Hawkins was too weak a candidate and Chambers was, in its opinion, not among the three front-runners. Fowler could do more good for the city by remaining in his position as city engineer. This left, in the newspaper's opinion, the choice between Canale and Farris. Canale, the *Press-Scimitar* felt, was too "close to county officials with whom the city government is in controversy and to the old political regime." Farris, on the other hand, had been administrative assistant to three mayors, and had received the endorsement of Mayor Orgill and the Dedicated Citizens Committee.

One of the major turning points of the campaign came on August 2, when the *Commercial Appeal* endorsed Farris for the public works post and urged Fowler to withdraw from the race to prevent the election of a Negro. This was an important gain for Farris and a serious blow to the chances of the other white candidates, especially Canale and Fowler, each of whom had hoped to gain the support of the *Commercial Appeal*. Both daily newspapers were in complete agreement on an entire slate of candidates for public office—an unusual situation in Memphis politics. This *Commercial Appeal* editorial enunciated what may be considered the "moderate" white standpoint:

At this juncture it would not be well for the Negro citizens or for community tranquility to elect a Negro public works commissioner or judge of the juvenile court. Whether a successful Negro commissioner would upset the department with wholesale replacements or a Negro judge exercise close supervisory powers over broken white families becomes a real fear in the hearts of many in the white community.

The avowed determination of the Negro candidates for the school board to insist on immediate integration causes uneasiness and is contrary to the wishes of the majority group in this area.

Because there are several white candidates for positions and only a single Negro candidate offering for each one, the possibilities of solid Negro support for a Negro candidate prevailing over the split vote for the white aspirants are indeed real.

Without disparaging the abilities or sagaciousness of the Negro candidates, the mere fact of their election would be a signal to the less restrained and sometimes irresponsible elements in the community and area to create dissension.

This we must avoid. The opportunity to express itself, the nature of the campaign and the standing of the Negro candidates affords the Negro community incentive that assures a large Negro bloc vote. How then to convince that bloc that it would not be good for them or for Memphis?

By facing up to the reality that if the Negro is to assume leadership and responsibility, he must have the opportunities to do so. If we are to dwell side-by-side in harmony and prosperity, then the white community must offer means to economic advancement.

The Negro should have more voice in the handling of his governmental affairs. Why couldn't the city hall provide for an assistant city attorney, for example, or juvenile courts set up a division for Negro problems with members of that race administering the offices?

We provide schools and training for Negroes. Only archaic thinking pre-

vents utilization of those talents for the good of the community and of the Negroes themselves. We do not want social amalgamation. We must, then, afford opportunity and equality before the law and ballot box. It is not only just, it is prudent.

This editorial was greeted with both approval and disapproval in the Negro community: approval because of the recommendation that Memphis Negroes be given greater opportunities for participation in city government and disapproval because of the plea for the defeat of the Negro candidates in the 1959 election. Sugarmon and Hooks report that they received offers of positions as assistant city attorney and juvenile court judge's assistant for Negro problems, respectively, if they would drop out of the campaign. Negro reaction to any such offer was expressed by an editorial in the *Tri-State Defender* on August 8: "A Negro head of a 'Negro Division' of any kind is completely unacceptable."

On July 26, the *Commercial Appeal's* political columnist observed:

If ever conditions were right for a bandwagon reaction, it is now as far as the Public Works and Juvenile Court Judge races are concerned. As noted here [in this column] several weeks ago, voters are willing to abandon their favorite candidate if there is some doubt about his probable success, and switch to an apparent winner in these two races to prevent the Negro entries from winning [by] a bloc vote.

On the same day both Canale and Farris called for Fowler to withdraw and each publicly pledged to reappoint Fowler to the city engineer's post if elected.

The month of July saw several changes taking place in the field of white public works candidates. On July 5, Samuel A. Hawkins, a moving service-operator and political unknown, entered this contest; Clark was disqualified on a technicality; Anderson withdrew on July 23, throwing his support to Farris. This left five white candidates in the public works contest at the beginning of August: Canale, Chambers, Farris, Fowler, and Hawkins.

The *Commercial Appeal* conducted four polls during the campaign. The results of the first poll, a survey conducted in one "average" precinct (two-thirds white, one-third Negro), were released on July 22. Will Fowler led in the public works race with 104 "votes," followed by Canale (62), Chambers (54), Sugarmon (37), Farris (21), Clark (8), and Anderson (6). This survey had been made early in the campaign and showed that Fowler was clearly the best known candidate while Farris was then almost unknown.

On July 25, the *Commercial Appeal* announced the results of its second poll, based this time on a scattered, city-wide sample. This poll showed Fowler still out in front and Farris still running fifth. This sample was broken down by race, and Sugarmon received no white "votes." Of those polled, 30 to 40 percent indicated that they were still undecided or did not intend to vote on August 20.

The results of the third poll were reported on August 9 under the headline: "Farris Gains Most Support in Third Survey of Voters." This survey, based upon a sampling of the registered voters in 17 precincts, showed Canale

leading with 89 "votes," followed by Farris (80), Fowler (66), Sugarmon (64), Chambers (43), and Hawkins (6). Canale and his backers were irate at the way the *Commercial Appeal* "misrepresented" the results of this poll. They felt that the paper ignored the fact that Canale led in the poll and emphasized instead the gain that Farris had made. Canale and some of his supporters made several attacks on the role of the newspapers in the campaign. Canale in a television speech on August 5 accused the *Commercial Appeal* and the *Press-Scimitar* of trying to "panic the voters" by telling them their salvation lay in voting for the slate of candidates endorsed by these newspapers, and of uniting "for the purpose of dominating and controlling political affairs in Memphis."

The fourth poll (a sampling of 261 white and 112 Negro voters in 17 precincts) indicated on August 16, four days before the election, that Farris was "heavily favored" to win. In this survey, Farris had advanced to first place with 109 "votes," followed by Sugarmon (77), Canale (59), Fowler (57), Chambers (47), and Hawkins (2). Sugarmon received a single white "vote" in this final poll.

The *Press-Scimitar* and the *Commercial Appeal* repeatedly called for the withdrawal of several white candidates from the public works race and urged Commissioners Loeb and Armour to endorse a candidate for this post if no withdrawals were forthcoming. These commissioners reported that they were under increasing pressure from white Memphians to make known their choice of the five white candidates. They were, however, reluctant to intervene in this race and thus perhaps offend supporters of the other candidates. Loeb stated that he would prefer to stay out of all races other than his own, but that he would publicly endorse a candidate in another race if it were necessary to prevent the election of a Negro. He still felt, however, that one white candidate would emerge as a front-runner in the public works contest and thereby "serve as a signpost for voters."

THE COMMISSIONERS ACT

On August 12, Commissioners Armour and Loeb publicly urged the white public works candidates to thin their ranks or else they would reluctantly choose a candidate and ask the voters to support him. Armour and Loeb called a meeting for the next morning at the Claridge Hotel to decide upon a course of action. They were reported by the *Commercial Appeal* as saying they were doing this "in response to public demand" and "for the good of the community and the mid-South" to elect a public works commissioner "by majority vote."

A stormy meeting was held on the morning of August 13. It was attended by Canale, Chambers, Farris, and Fowler, but ended in apparent failure when none of the candidates was willing to withdraw. The four candidates could not even agree to a meeting of their representatives to schedule a second meeting, and no further meetings of this kind were held. Loeb and Armour, the *Commercial Appeal* reported on August 14, urged these candidates "to do something" by Sunday, August 16; otherwise the two would probably endorse one or two of the candidates. This newspaper's political columnist reported on the same day:

Unprecedented is the effort exerted to remove candidates by personal persuasion. Commissioner Henry Loeb and Commissioner Claude Armour, themselves candidates though with opposition believed to be less than a serious threat, reacted to public opinion in requesting the public works entries to thin their ranks to prevent a minority vote winner.

Fowler had steadfastly maintained throughout the campaign that he was in the race to stay, and on August 14 his supporters placed an ad in the *Commercial Appeal* under the caption, "Will Fowler is Ahead," citing the newspaper polls to support this contention. Nevertheless, on August 15 Fowler suddenly withdrew, stating that although he considered himself the leading candidate, he was dropping out for the good of the city and urged other white candidates to follow his example. Fowler made no endorsement of other candidates.

Fowler's move met with praise on the part of the newspapers, city officials, white citizens, and the other white candidates. Sugarmon, according to the *Commercial Appeal* of August 16, declared: "The fact that he [Fowler] withdrew is evidence of tremendous pressure being exerted by some particular interest groups which, in my opinion, constitute a threat to the welfare of the city—a threat much greater than that posed by the candidacy of a member of the racial minority, if indeed that can be called a threat." Although both Farris and Canale promptly claimed that Fowler backers were switching to them, most of the members of Fowler's campaign committee did not openly endorse any other candidate. Fowler's withdrawal fitted into the campaign strategy of Farris, who from the beginning had designated Canale as his "single foe."

Farris was given a final big boost on the day before the election when he was publicly endorsed by Armour's and Loeb's campaign managers and three members of Loeb's campaign committee. Commissioners Armour and Loeb did not announce their support of any public works candidate, but this action by their campaign managers was widely interpreted as *their* endorsement of Farris. Mayor Orgill also repeated his endorsement of Farris just prior to the election. Farris now had the backing of the *Commercial Appeal*, *Press-Scimitar*, Dedicated Citizens Committee, Mayor Orgill, the campaign managers of Commissioners Armour and Loeb, the Memphis and Shelby County Taxpayers Association, and, he contended, the Council of Civic Clubs. Canale had the support of the Business and Professional Political Action Group and the Veterans for Better Government. Chambers had been endorsed by several labor groups. Fowler had withdrawn, and Hawkins was not a serious contender.

The white campaign drew to a close with both daily newspapers printing sample ballots on which their choices for city offices were indicated. The public works race held the spotlight and appeared to be a three-way contest between Farris, Canale, and Sugarmon. A record vote was forecast. White leaders felt that a large white turnout at the polls would defeat Sugarmon. The *Press-Scimitar* pointed out on the day before the election: "If the white citizens vote in high enough numbers, there will be no negro (sic) candidates elected. If the vote is much lower than 100,000, Sugarmon probably will win. The more above 100,000 the vote goes, the less chance he will have."

THE NEGRO CAMPAIGN

After achieving unity of leadership and agreement on campaign strategy, the course of the Negroes was clear: to conduct the campaign as planned. What strategic maneuvering there was took place almost entirely on the part of the whites; it was set into motion by their reaction to the entry of Negro candidates and culminated in their efforts to cut down the field of white candidates in the public works and juvenile court judge races. The main question of concern in the Negro campaign was how successfully Negro leaders could execute their strategy.

The raising of campaign funds was an early and continuing activity of the Volunteer Ticket organization. The almost fifty-man finance committee was broken down into three subcommittees, one for each of the three main sources of campaign funds. One subcommittee planned a mass Freedom Rally; a second dealt with a planned fund-raising dinner; the third group had personal solicitations as its function. The Negro candidates submitted a budget of estimated campaign expenses totaling \$12,000. This proposed budget, which was later increased to \$17,500, was approved by the Volunteer Ticket Steering Committee. More than \$20,000 was raised, almost entirely within the Negro community. About \$7,500 was raised through personal solicitation of gifts ranging from \$25 to \$500. Campaign rallies, church collections, and unsolicited contributions brought in \$3,500. The remainder was raised by the mass rally and the fund-raising dinner.

Other early efforts of the Volunteer Ticket organization consisted in setting up and staffing a campaign headquarters on Beale Street and in forming a speakers' bureau and a youth division. A crucial organizational task was the creation of a ward and precinct organization. The existing ward and precinct organization of the Shelby County Democratic Club and the Lincoln League were taken as a starting framework. Both party groups made the names of their precinct workers available to the Volunteer organization, and additional volunteer workers were solicited at rallies and through notices in the Negro newspapers. By election day, the Volunteer organization had a roster of 1200 campaign workers.

The Non-Partisan Registration League called for volunteer workers and intensified its activities in a door-to-door drive to register as many new Negro voters as possible before the July 21 deadline. The Negro newspapers urged their readers to register. Women were stationed in the halls of the Shelby County Office Building to urge Negroes who came to attend to other matters to register to vote while they were there. The Volunteer Ticket organization had a list of all of the registered Negro voters in Memphis. Volunteer workers began canvassing voters on a precinct and neighborhood basis by personal visit and by telephone. The voters were asked if they needed a babysitter or transportation to the polls, and if they would be willing to serve as volunteer workers or contribute to the campaign fund.

The Negro candidates began campaigning intensively immediately after the organization of the Volunteer Ticket organization in early June. In the mornings the candidates systematically visited barber shops, beauty shops, beer gardens, and cafes, at which places they would leave their cards to be

passed out to the clientele. At noon the Volunteer candidates made the rounds of the cafes and restaurants. The afternoons were taken up with an increasing number of "coke parties" for the Volunteer candidates. These were gatherings of from 20 to 30 people in private homes, although two outdoor coke parties attracted more than 500 guests. By the end of the campaign as many as eight of these gatherings were taking place daily. At most of these small groups people from the Volunteer Ticket Speakers Bureau spoke. This campaign technique "caught fire" and any group of twelve or more people could request and be sent a Volunteer Ticket speaker. In the evenings, the Volunteer candidates would speak at union meetings, and large rallies held in churches and in vacant lots. The Negro candidates also solicited votes at plants when workers went to or left work, and when shifts changed.

In addition, two large rallies, featuring prominent outside speakers, were carefully planned and held. These two highpoints of the Negro campaign had a two-fold function: to dramatize the campaign in the Negro community and to raise campaign funds. The first event, the Freedom Rally, was planned for the end of July at Martin Stadium, and 20,000 tickets were printed in anticipation of the largest Negro political rally in Memphis history. It was to feature The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahalia Jackson, and a 1000-member choir from Negro churches. The Negro owner of the stadium, however, refused to allow it to be used for political purposes, and the rally was shifted to Mason Temple. There on the evening of July 30, Dr. King spoke to 5,000 Negroes and urged a bloc vote for the Negro candidates. George Lee and the Negro candidates also spoke to an enthusiastic audience, who were asked to contribute one dollar each to the Volunteer Ticket campaign fund. The *Commercial Appeal* carried a page-wide picture of the Negro rally with an accompanying story headlined, "'Want to Be Free' Is Chant at Big Negro Political Rally." The *Tri-State Defender* headed its report of the rally: "5,000 Bury Uncle Toms at Rally," a reference to the speaker's remarks that the "Uncle Toms" (subservient Negroes) in the schools, pulpits, and in city jobs should be silenced by Negro political action in the election.

A second large rally was in the form of a fund-raising dinner, held on the evening of August 14. Four hundred Negroes paid ten dollars each to hear Mrs. Daisy Bates, Little Rock NAACP leader, and the Volunteer Ticket candidates speak. Newspaper accounts of this rally indicated that the local Negro candidates were even more enthusiastically received by the audience than was the prominent guest speaker. Lee reported at this time that Memphis Negroes had contributed \$18,000 to the Volunteer Ticket campaign fund.

The mood in the Negro community was clearly one of a "crusade." The stronger the white reaction to the Negro candidates, the more the campaign of the Volunteer Ticket candidates aroused the enthusiasm of Memphis Negroes, whose growing sense of integrity and self-confidence was well expressed by a Negro newspaper, the *Memphis World*, on July 11, in an editorial entitled "Watermelon and Politics:"

A few years ago the best way to get much of the Negro vote was to appeal to his stomach. . . . Those days are now over. Segregationists know that they can no longer get the Negro vote with a watermelon. So they are now saying

that they don't want the Negro vote in the hope that they can attract more of the white votes to make up the difference.

NEGRO ENDORSEMENTS

On July 27, the Memphis and Shelby County Leadership Council announced its endorsement of the five Negro candidates: the four Volunteer Ticket candidates and Elihue Stanback, candidate for tax assessor. A week later, in a move that was cleared with the Volunteer Ticket Steering Committee, the Leadership Council endorsed five white candidates: Partee Fleming for mayor, John T. Dwyer and Jimmy Moore for city commission posts, and Ray W. Churchill and William B. Ingram, Jr., for city judge posts. This was a move designed to demonstrate the influence of the Negro vote when used to support or oppose white candidates. The criteria for Negro support of these endorsed candidates varied with the particular contests. Fleming won Negro support although Negro leaders realized that he did not have sufficient white support to present a serious threat to Loeb. They considered the race to be important enough, however, to "waste" the Negro vote as a protest against Loeb. The support for Moore was, similarly, an "anti-Dillard" endorsement. Negro leaders believed that Moore could be no worse than the incumbent who had won such enmity from the Negro community. Moore also could expect considerable white support for his candidacy. Dwyer won Negro endorsement because Negro leaders felt that he would stand up against Loeb and that they could more easily predict his conduct in office than that of his opponent. The incumbent of the city judge post contested by Churchill had a consistently bad record in cases dealing with Negroes, in the opinion of Negro leaders. Churchill, on the other hand, had a fairly good image in the Negro community; Ingram also had a favorable image among Negroes.

The Interdenominational Church Movement, on August 10, supplemented the action of the Leadership Council by endorsing the same slate of candidates, both Negro and white. This was an organization of Negro ministers and laymen, representing more than 100 churches, which was formed in 1958 for the purpose of studying candidates for public office and advising Negro voters on their qualifications. This organization had never been very active and it was "revitalized" by the Volunteer Ticket organization during the 1959 campaign to support the Negro candidates.

Both Memphis Negro newspapers, the *Tri-State Defender* and the *Memphis World*, endorsed the same slate of candidates. On August 15 the former newspaper editorialized:

Negro Memphians have come of age politically and they intend to use their ballots as the bargaining weapons they are. If these men [i. e., the endorsed candidates] are pushed into office by Negro voters, then these very citizens intend to stand by and see what compensation they will receive.

There was little disagreement within the Negro community as to which candidates Negro voters were to support. Evers' and Stanback's Binghampton Civic League did differ on the endorsement of one white candidate, and

at least one Negro leader announced her support for Mrs. Coe for the school board. But these were insignificant deviations from the dominant strategy.

In addition to the campaign rallies, coke parties, house-to-house and telephone canvassing, distribution of campaign literature, and word-of-mouth advertising which went on throughout the campaign, the Volunteer Ticket organization made use of the newspapers, churches, and radio and television in their efforts to activate the Negro electorate. The two Memphis Negro newspapers gave extensive coverage to the Negro campaign. These newspapers urged Negro Memphians to register and go to the polls to vote for candidates they recommended. In addition, the Negro press was highly critical of white political leaders, Loeb in particular, for their efforts to prevent the election of Negro candidates. The daily newspapers both aided and hindered the Negro campaign. These papers unintentionally advanced the Negro cause by giving extensive coverage to the Negro campaign and, by their criticism of the efforts of the Negro candidates to gain public office, undoubtedly induced more Negroes to go to the polls. The *Commercial Appeal* and the *Press-Scimitar* helped to create an intensity of feeling within the Negro community that was translated into political action at the polls. In seeking their primary goal of activating the white electorate, however, the daily newspapers hindered more than they helped the Negro campaign.

Negro ministers took a more active part in the 1959 campaign than they had in previous elections. Two ministers were candidates for public office. Others served on the Volunteer Ticket committees and on the Leadership Council. The Interdenominational Church Movement served as a good publicity medium for the Volunteer candidates in the Negro community. Campaign rallies were held in the churches and campaign funds collected there. From the pulpits Negro ministers urged their congregations to register and vote for the Volunteer candidates. A large group of ministers met weekly during the campaign. At one of these meetings one politically active minister remarked: "We ministers might have aversion to being called politicians, but we owe our parishioners leadership." Ministers spoke out publicly in criticism of Dr. Martin's refusal of the use of Martin Stadium for the Freedom Rally, of the endorsement of Mrs. Coe by a Negro school teacher, and they sent a letter of protest to Henry Loeb for his efforts to defeat the Negro candidates.

One hundred Volunteer Ticket spot announcements were broadcast over a local Negro radio station in an effort to activate the Negro electorate. The first two television appearances of a Negro candidate were not the result of Negro planning. Sugarmon was invited to participate, along with the white public works candidates, on a local television station's "Meet Your Candidates" panel. This program, shown on the evening of August 9, marked Sugarmon's first appearance before a city-wide audience of both white and Negro Memphians. A week later Sugarmon appeared on a similar panel conducted by a second Memphis television station. The Volunteer Ticket Steering Committee placed in the Sunday *Commercial Appeal* four days before the election a half-page advertisement entitled "An Appeal to the Memphis Conscience." This sole Negro newspaper advertisement fea-

tured the pictures of the four Volunteer Ticket candidates and a statement by George Lee listing the contributions that Negro Memphians had made to their city in the past and stating the Negro goal: full equality with regard to education, employment, housing, and participation in government.

On election eve, the Volunteer Ticket organization broadcasted an hour-and-a-half radio program over a Negro station. A half hour of it was devoted to a campaign rally at a large Negro church and one hour to a taped program featuring community leaders who told the Negro voters why they should vote for the Volunteer candidates. Also on election eve the Volunteer Ticket organization sponsored a half-hour television panel program featuring the four Volunteer candidates.

ELECTION DAY

Election day began with sunrise prayer services in 40 Negro churches, followed by breakfast and a march to the polls. At the polls and at area headquarters in predominantly Negro precincts 1,100 Negro campaign workers (700 of them paid) were on the job. In addition, a paid white poll watcher was stationed at each polling place in white precincts to watch for irregularities. All poll workers were issued mimeographed instructions outlining their duties. Twenty-four Negro churches were designated area headquarters. From these churches volunteer workers manned a babysitter service and a car-pool. A final telephone canvass of Negro voters was made, and workers at the polls distributed campaign literature and sample ballots on which the Volunteer Ticket candidates and endorsees were marked.

Long lines at the polls were the order of the day, especially in the predominantly Negro precincts. The early edition of the *Press-Scimitar* and the local radio stations emphasized that Negroes were voting in large numbers. Several sound trucks roamed the white precincts and urged white voters to go to the polls. Volunteer Ticket sound trucks worked the Negro precincts. All indications pointed to a record turnout for a Memphis election. The public works race was the focal point of attention locally and nationally. Would Sugarmon, who was given an even chance of winning, become the first Negro to be elected to a city office in Memphis since Reconstruction days?

ELECTION RESULTS AND REACTIONS

When all the returns were in, Farris had won with a total of 58,925 votes. Sugarmon came in second with 35,348 votes, trailed by Canale (19,297), Chambers (13,090), Fowler (2,218)—he had withdrawn too late to have his name removed from the ballot—and Hawkins (408). The bandwagon had rolled for Farris: he received more votes than all his white opponents combined, and three times as many votes as Canale, his closest white opponent. A more concerted Negro effort would not have altered the outcome of this race, for Farris received more votes than the total number of registered Negro voters in the city.

Table 1 gives a breakdown of the public works vote in terms of the racial composition of the precincts. It clearly demonstrates the existence of a two-fold pattern of racial bloc voting; there was a white, as well as a Negro bloc

vote. The more racially homogeneous the precincts (in terms of registered voters), the greater the support given the "favored" candidate—Sugarmon in the case of the Negroes and Farris in the case of the whites. Sugarmon received the same small percentage of votes in all-white precincts that Farris did in the all-Negro precincts. Whereas the other white public works candidates together won a higher proportion of the votes in the Negro areas than did Farris, the latter candidate rapidly pulled away from the field in white areas. Farris polled almost double the combined vote of all other public works candidates in the all-white precincts.

In 1959, by far the greatest number of voters went to the polls of any local election in Memphis history; 129,870 people cast ballots. The previous record was 86,370 in the 1955 municipal election. Considerably more voters cast ballots in the public works and juvenile court judge races,—129,286 and 126,217, respectively—than in any other contests. The next highest figure, in the race for mayor, was 6,500 less than in the public works race. The voter turnout in the other races was *at least* 11,500 less than in the public works contest. This exceptionally high vote in the two contests in which Negro candidates presented the greatest "threat" is further clarified by the data in Table 2, where the higher rate of turnout in predominantly white and all-white precincts is demonstrated. Although the proportion of registered voters who cast ballots in any of the precinct types was high for a local election, the 73 percent turnout in all-white precincts was remarkable and is evidence of the success of efforts to defeat Sugarmon with a massive white vote. It is estimated that the highest percentage of registered Negro voters casting ballots in a local election prior to 1959 was 41 percent.

Whereas the success of Negro leaders in activating the Negro electorate is apparent, these results were overshadowed by the intense reaction to the Negro candidates within the white electorate. These findings seem to indicate that many "apathetic" white voters were motivated to go to the polls mainly to cast their ballots against Sugarmon and Hooks.

TABLE 1
THE PUBLIC WORKS VOTE IN PRECINCTS OF VARYING RACIAL COMPOSITION
(In terms of Registered Voters)

	Type of Precinct				
	<i>All Negro</i> (95-100% Negro) (18 pcts.)	<i>Pred.</i> <i>Negro</i> (60-95% Negro) (15 pcts.)	<i>Mixed</i> (40-60% Negro) (10 pcts.)	<i>Pred.</i> <i>White</i> (60-95% White) 33 pcts.)	<i>All White</i> (95-100% White) (67 pcts.)
Public Works					
Candidates					
Sugarmon	94%	80%	48%	15%	2%
Farris	2	9	28	51	64
Other white	4	11	24	34	34
candidates					
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Sources: The data for the classification of precincts was taken from the Shelby County Election Commission voter registration tabulation, as of July 1959. The election data was taken from the official election commission tally sheet.

Note: Pred. = predominantly; pcts. = precincts.

TABLE 2
VOTER TURNOUT IN THE PUBLIC WORKS RACE IN PRECINCTS OF VARYING
RACIAL COMPOSITION

	Type of Precinct				
	<i>All Negro</i> (95-100% Negro) (18 pcts.)	<i>Pred.</i> <i>Negro</i> (60-95% Negro) (15 pcts.)	<i>Mixed</i> (40-60% Negro) (10 pcts.)	<i>Pred.</i> <i>White</i> (60-95% White) 33 pcts.)	<i>All White</i> (95-100% White) 67 pcts.)
Total Registered Voters	26,446	22,926	10,226	36,289	91,654
Voters casting ballots in PWC race	17,045	14,454	6,280	24,248	67,259
Percent Turnout	64%	63%	61%	67%	73%

Source of Data: The data for the classification of precincts was taken from the Shelby County Election Commission voter registration tabulation, as of July 1959. The election data was taken from the official election commission tally sheet.

Note: Pred. = predominantly; pcts. = precincts.

The voting pattern in the other contests which involved Negro candidates was similar to that of the public works race. Each of the Negro candidates ran second in his respective contest, trailing the winning candidate by at least 20,000 votes. Hooks received 94 percent of the votes in the all-Negro precincts; Bunton, 95 percent; Love, 92 percent; and Stanback, the only Negro candidate who was not a member of the Volunteer Ticket, 90 percent. All received a token vote in the all-white precincts. Sugarmon picked up the highest total vote of all the Negro candidates and the most that a Negro candidate had ever received in a Memphis city election. His more than 35,000 votes would have been sufficient for election in previous Memphis elections.

In the mayoralty contest Henry Loeb soundly defeated Partee Fleming by more than 50,000 votes. Fleming, who received 16 percent of the votes in the predominantly white precincts and only 6 percent in the all-white precincts, polled 88 percent of the votes in the all-Negro precincts and 74 percent in the predominantly Negro areas. Loeb received only a slightly higher proportion of the votes in all-Negro areas than Fleming in all-white precincts. This indicates that Negro leaders can get out the Negro vote as an instrument of protest against a white candidate they dislike, for they realized from the beginning that Fleming was a weak candidate with no chance of defeating Loeb. Negro support at the polls for Moore in a city commission contest insured his victory. Moore and his major opponent, incumbent Commissioner Dillard, ran about even in white wards, but Moore polled 89 percent of the vote in all-Negro precincts to only 6 percent for his opponent. The "anti-Dillard" Negro vote was even more effective than the "anti-Loeb" vote, perhaps because Negroes felt that in this contest their vote could swing the election. In a third commission race, incumbent Commissioner Dwyer, who had Negro endorsement, led by a fairly wide margin in all types of precincts,

but he received his greatest support in the Negro areas. In the all-Negro precincts he received 86 percent of the votes, in comparison with 14 percent for his single opponent. The Stanback-Evers organization endorsement of Dwyer's opponent in this race may have been the reason for some defection in the Negro vote, but the difference in Negro support for white candidates in this and the other major contests was slight. The two city judge candidates with Negro endorsement polled slightly more than 90 percent of the vote in all-Negro precincts. The incumbent endorsee won handily, but the Negro endorsee who opposed an entrenched city judge lost by a wide margin.

LEADERS APPRAISE RESULTS

The reaction of the Negro candidates and Negro political leaders to the outcome of the election can be summed up in a statement Sugarmon made on election day: "We won everything but the election." They felt that a good beginning had been made in the direction of political maturity and sophistication of Memphis Negroes, and of recognition by the white community of the power of the Negro vote. Negro leaders announced that plans had already been started to keep the Volunteer organization alive. In Lee's words: "We have a trading point now. White candidates will gaze with envy at the Negro bloc—and we'll be getting some of those things we deserve."

Negro leaders were surprised at the intensity of the white reaction to the Negro candidates. They had been divided in their estimates of Sugarmon's chances of winning. Some Negro leaders had believed that he had a genuine chance of winning; others never harbored such high hopes. The Negro estimate of the white reaction may be summed up in a statement Hooks made on election night: "White citizens responded to daily newspaper pleas in one of the greatest demonstrations of bloc voting this nation has ever seen. People were afraid of the Negro and they betrayed their favorite sons—the candidates they really liked—to get on the bandwagon and defeat the Negroes." The two primary factors which Negro leaders believed had led to the defeat of Sugarmon were the bandwagon for Farris engineered by the two daily newspapers and Fowler's withdrawal, brought about, in their opinion, by efforts on the part of Commissioners Loeb and Armour.

The white reaction of the election outcome was one of relief, but, for the most part, not one of bitterness. White political leaders and the newspapers seemed impressed by the show of strength on the part of the Negro voters. On August 21, the *Commercial Appeal*, editorialized: "In this election the Negroes got together, flexed their muscles, and showed a capacity for using the electoral processes. It was a situation which could have had embarrassing consequences, but the outcome was satisfactory, if the white community now realizes that the Negroes are due more participation in municipal government." The *Press-Scimitar* wrote on the same day: "Negro citizens 'segregated' themselves by choosing a ticket of their own, but you can hardly blame them for wanting to take advantage of the absence of a run-off to show their political strength, and they can hardly blame the white community for its determination to see that they would not succeed in electing their candidates."

Voices were raised almost at once in the white community for a run-off

provision, and it was anticipated that Memphis would have one after the session of the state legislature in 1961.*

The two most impressive factors in the white victory in the 1959 municipal election are the extremely high turnout of white voters and the bandwagon which developed for Farris. Both of these factors seem to point to an unusually high degree of political influence on the part of the press. Both Frank Ahlgren, editor of the *Commercial Appeal*, and Edward Meeman, editor of the *Press-Scimitar*, believe that the press played a more important part than usual in city elections. Some politicians consider the newspapers the real "winners" in the 1959 election. In the first place, there was no effective political organization to which the white citizens could look for guidance. Thus the fragmentation of the white political community probably led white Memphians to look to their newspapers for guidance in a time of "crisis"—in a time in which they felt compelled to act but did not know how. Second, the *Commercial Appeal* and the *Press-Scimitar* were in agreement as to the basic issue, preventing the election of Negro candidates, and, in an unusual show of unanimity, endorsed the same slate of candidates for city offices. The one contest which could have divided these newspapers, the mayoralty race, ceased to be a divisive force when incumbent Mayor Edmund Orgill dropped out of the race. The daily newspapers were influential in bringing Farris out in front in the public works race and in convincing white voters, many of whom favored other candidates, that Farris was the "strong man" in the public works contest.

It is difficult to estimate the influence of the various factors which worked to put Farris out in front as the strong candidate in the public works race. In the initial stage of the campaign, the determining factor was probably Farris' campaign organization. The endorsement of Farris by the Dedicated Citizens Committee was probably the "key" that started a chain of endorsements of his candidacy. After the initial stage, the two daily newspapers probably did most to convince the white voters that they should desert their favorite candidates and vote for Farris.

One of the most significant events in the public works campaign was Fowler's withdrawal. Little can be said about how this decision was reached, since Fowler and his friends are reluctant to discuss it. At least as long as Fowler is still connected with the city government the full story will probably not be known. After repeated declarations of his intention to remain in the campaign, Fowler did withdraw suddenly, too late to have his name removed from the ballot. The newspapers and several groups and individuals urged Fowler to withdraw and they make competing claims as to their influence in shaping Fowler's decision. Negro leaders attribute his decision to withdraw to pressure exerted by Commissioner Loeb. Other political observers, however, including people close to Fowler, discount the influence of Loeb and Armour in this matter. They contend that Fowler decided to withdraw after consulting several of his close friends and political advisers. After the election there were reports of a possible "deal" between Loeb and Fowler, whereby Loeb would resign as public works commissioner after the election and have

* Memphis still has no provision for a run-off, since none was passed by the legislature in its 1961 session.

Fowler appointed to serve the remainder of his term. If such a deal were made, which seems unlikely, its terms were not carried out. A more plausible report of "who got Fowler out" has it that an influential supporter of another white public works candidate, who must remain unnamed, resisted efforts by a Fowler backer to convince his candidate to withdraw. Instead, this leader insisted that Fowler was the one who should withdraw. Together with a prominent Loeb backer he appeared at a meeting of Fowler's campaign committee and argued his point. According to this report, Fowler agreed to withdraw on the condition that he be retained in his job as city engineer. This white leader then sought out and got oral commitments to reappoint Fowler as city engineer from Loeb and city commission candidates Armour, Dwyer, Dillard, and Canale. He then visited Fowler and informed him of the commitments and received from Fowler a statement of withdrawal, which he then took to Frank Ahlgren, editor of the *Commercial Appeal*. It is also reported that this same leader also attempted to get Chambers to withdraw, but his plan failed when the candidate he was supporting would not go along with the deal. Even had Fowler remained in the public works race, many political observers believe, the outcome would have been the same; Farris would still have won, though perhaps by not as wide a margin.

The question of why other white candidates were able to resist pressure and remain in the public works race may be raised. Anderson, one of the weaker candidates, did withdraw early in the campaign. Hawkins was obviously so weak a candidate as to present no threat to white unity. Of all the public works candidates, Canale and Chambers were the most seasoned campaigners. They had been candidates for public office before and had the allegiance of a hard core of supporters. These candidates had enough support to give them some hope of winning and thereby to resist pressures to withdraw. An element of ego and an exaggerated notion of their support were undoubtedly involved; once having entered the public works race they were determined not to be forced out of it by anyone. In their cases there was no obvious "lever" which could be applied, as was advanced age and job security in the case of Fowler.

AFTERMATH AND OUTLOOK

Although no Negro candidates were elected to city offices in 1959, much was accomplished by Negro leaders. It was established, beyond all doubt, that they, when united, could "deliver" the substantial Negro vote in support of or in opposition to specific white candidates. The Negro vote was recognized as being powerful and cohesive. Many Negro leaders, however, were convinced by their experience in the 1959 election that a "high pressure" Negro campaign would have the undesirable side effect of driving 15 white voters to the polls for every 10 Negro voters who would turn out. They began thinking, therefore, in terms of future "low pressure" Negro campaigns with no large rallies, no outside speakers, and a smaller number of Negro candidates who would run only for minor offices. Their feeling was that this kind of Negro campaign strategy would run less chance of alarming the white community and would bring about a better balance between the white

and the Negro vote. The only questions in their minds were: "Can we get out the Negro vote with a low key campaign? Or is a high pressure campaign essential to turn out a large Negro vote?" The 1960 county election and Democratic primary provided Negro leaders with an opportunity to seek the answers to these questions.

Since there was little to contest in the Republican primary, Negro leaders continued the Volunteer organization in a spirit of unity and conducted a low pressure campaign, with the main emphasis on organizational work rather than intense publicity. In 1960 four Negroes were candidates: three of them for the Shelby County Democratic Executive Committee in the Democratic primary and a fourth for the county court in the general election. In addition, a number of white candidates sought and won Negro support. A primary Negro objective in 1960 was to carry Shelby County for Estes Kefauver in his bid for re-election to the United States Senate. A low key Negro campaign fit in well with Kefauver's strategy, for his opponent was a segregationist with strong support in West Tennessee. A highly publicized Negro effort would undoubtedly have increased the white turnout at the polls in Shelby County and strengthened the position of his opponent.

Negro leaders also entered into a "deal" with members of the remnant of the county machine who were seeking election to the county court and other county offices. In return for Negro electoral support, these white candidates promised to employ Negroes in white collar jobs as sheriff's deputies and delinquent tax collectors with the county government. One of these men, a political boss in the northern part of Shelby County, also agreed to release "his" Negroes to vote for Kefauver. This move on the part of Negro leaders met with reactions of surprise on the part of the daily newspapers and shock on the part of the white liberals, who accused Negro leaders of selling themselves down the river for a few jobs for Negroes and turning their backs on their real friends.

Negro strategy in the August 1960 elections met with qualified success. A Negro candidate was elected to the Shelby County Democratic Executive Committee and became the first of his race to hold an elective party office in Shelby County since Reconstruction days. The other Negro candidates were defeated. Negro and labor support enabled Kefauver to carry Shelby County, which had been considered a stronghold of support for his opponent, by 10,000 votes. Only two of the thirteen white candidates who won Negro endorsement failed to gain election, and these were defeated by less than two thousand votes.

Negro political leaders were disappointed with the Negro turnout at the polls. An estimated 32,000 Shelby County Negroes cast their ballots in the August elections; this figure was 10,000 less than the campaign goal. Negro leaders drew the conclusion that they could not expect as large a Negro turnout with a low key campaign as with a high pressure one, but they believe that much can be gained by more intensive voter registration drives, training of campaign workers and by improving their techniques of low pressure campaigning.

The major Negro accomplishment in the August, 1960, elections was the recognition by white politicians of the Negro bargaining strategy. Frank Kil-

patrick, who succeeded Maceo Walker as chairman of the Shelby County Democratic Club, said: "Since our last [1960] election, forty-three Negroes have been appointed to political jobs in Memphis—mostly by men who ran as segregationists before they counted up the precinct returns." * Since the 1960 election, Negroes have been hired as sheriff's deputies, delinquent tax collectors, and have been appointed to the Memphis Transit Authority and the Traffic Advisory Commission.

In reaching an agreement of mutual benefit with the county machine remnant, Negro leaders thereby served notice on all future white candidates, whether "liberal" or "conservative," that the Memphis Negro vote is a strong and cohesive force which can and will arbitrate between white candidates for public office. As one influential white leader expressed it: "There will be no appeal to an all-white vote [again]. That's a thing of the past. No professional politician will be able to say in the future that he doesn't want the Negro vote." White political leaders who were interviewed believe that in future elections Negro candidates stand little chance of winning, but that the Memphis Negro vote will be an influential agent in determining which white candidates win. The Negro vote is considered by many white political leaders already to be the best organized and most cohesive force in local elections. The 1959 and 1960 elections have established the fact that the Memphis Negro political leadership can function effectively in a unified, nonpartisan campaign, that they can "get out the vote," and that Memphis Negroes will follow their recommendations on which white candidates they should vote for.

Future Negro strategy in local elections will tend to be pragmatic and bargaining, with no hard and fast alignment with any white political faction, although efforts will be made to work more closely with organized labor in Memphis. It is unlikely that an effort will be made in the near future to elect a Negro to a politically important office, such as a city commission post. Rather, Negro strategy will be directed toward electing Negro candidates to minor offices and to arbitrating between competing white candidates. Two of the major Negro goals in local elections are and will remain those of increasing the number of Negroes employed in white-collar jobs with the city and county governments and in eliminating discriminatory practices (such as segregated rest rooms and drinking fountains) in city and county buildings. White candidates who seek to win Negro support will have to produce material improvements in these areas to retain that support. The Negro voter in Memphis is quickly coming of age, and he is likely to show a rapid increase in political maturity and sophistication over the next few years. The 1959 municipal election was a crucial first step in that direction.

* Quoted in Wilma Dykeman and James Stokely, "The Big Cure for Segregation," *The New York Times Magazine*, September 24, 1961, p. 109.

MEMBERS OF THE EAGLETON INSTITUTE OF POLITICS ADVISORY BOARD



Dean Ruth M. Adams, Douglass College
President Mason W. Gross, Rutgers, The State University
Mrs. Francis Hopkins, New Jersey League of Women Voters
Dr. Arthur Mangelsdorff, Academy of Medicine of Northern
New Jersey

EAGLETON INSTITUTE OF POLITICS STAFF

Donald G. Herzberg, Executive Director
Paul Tillett, Assistant Director
Donald H. Riddle, Director of Special Projects
Mark Ferber, Director of Undergraduate Activities
Sebastian de Grazia, Director of Development

The Wells Phillips and Florence Peshine Eagleton Institute of Politics, established in 1954 at Douglass College of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is a unique educational experiment. The Institute originated in the settled conviction of the donor that "the cultivation of civic responsibility and leadership among the American people in the field of practical political affairs is of vital and increasing importance to our state and nation." The Institute is a nonpartisan educational organization dedicated exclusively to the advancement of learning in the field of practical political affairs and government within the framework of the two-party system, and is especially concerned with the development of and education for responsible leadership in civic and governmental affairs. As one means to this objective, the Institute, in collaboration with the McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., has sponsored a program of case studies in practical politics.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

William E. Wright received his Bachelor's degree from Millsaps College in 1954. From 1957-1959, he studied at the Free University in Berlin on a Fulbright Scholarship. He was a National Defense Fellow in Comparative Politics at Vanderbilt University where he received an M.A. in 1960. A candidate for the Ph.D. at Vanderbilt, he received a Social Science Research Council grant for 1962-63.

CASES IN THE EAGLETON INSTITUTE SERIES

THE LITTLE ROCK RECALL ELECTION by Henry M. Alexander.

THE POLITICS OF REAPPORTIONMENT IN WASHINGTON STATE by Gordon E. Baker.

THE RIVERSIDE DEMOCRATS by Donald C. Blaisdell.

THE RISE OF THE DEMOCRATIC CLUBS IN CALIFORNIA by Francis Carney.

CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN: MAINE ELECTS A DEMOCRAT by John C. Donovan.

THE PRIMARY THAT MADE A PRESIDENT: WEST VIRGINIA 1960 by Harry W. Ernst.

AN ALL-NEGRO TICKET IN BALTIMORE by G. James Fleming.

A UNIVERSITY IN THE WEB OF POLITICS by Samuel Halperin.

MINORITY POLITICS IN BLACK BELT ALABAMA by Charles V. Hamilton.

THE PURGE THAT FAILED: TAMMANY v. POWELL by David Hapgood.

NONPARTISAN ELECTION: A POLITICAL ILLUSION? by Marvin A. Harder.

DOLLARS FOR DEMOCRATS, 1959 by Bernard Hennessy.

THE LOYALTY PLEDGE CONTROVERSY IN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY by Abraham Holtzman.

CONNECTICUT'S CHALLENGE PRIMARY: A STUDY IN LEGISLATIVE POLITICS by Duane Lockard.

BIPARTISAN COALITION IN ILLINOIS by Thomas B. Littlewood.

CANDIDATE by Joseph P. Lyford.

THE SAN LUIS RECLAMATION BILL by Angus McDonald.

THE STRUGGLE FOR REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP IN INDIANA, 1954 by Frank Munger.

THE MONRONEY RESOLUTION: CONGRESSIONAL INITIATIVE IN FOREIGN POLICY MAKING by James A. Robinson.

THE NOMINATION OF 'CHIP' BOHLEN by James N. Rosenau.

TOWARD MAJORITY RULE IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE by Alan Rosenthal.

REPUBLICAN PRIMARY FIGHT: A STUDY IN FACTIONALISM by Rhoten A. Smith and Clarence J. Hein.

A LEGISLATIVE CAMPAIGN FOR A FEDERAL MINIMUM WAGE, 1955 by Gus Tyler.

TWO PARTIES FOR SHREVEPORT by Kenneth N. Vines.

OKLAHOMA GOES WET: THE REPEAL OF PROHIBITION by Robert S. Walker and Samuel C. Patterson.

MEADE ALCORN AND THE 1958 ELECTION by Philip S. Wilder, Jr.

THE DEFEAT OF HOME RULE IN SALT LAKE CITY by J. D. Williams.

MEMPHIS POLITICS: A STUDY IN RACIAL BLOC VOTING by William E. Wright.